THE

Moral and Religious Cabinet.

"To aid the cause of Virtue and Religion."

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GENUINE CHRISTIANITY.

By the late Rev. John Wesley.

[Concluded from page 53]

4. IF then it were possible (which I conceive it is not) to shake the traditional evidence of Christianity, still he that has the internal evidence (and every true believer hath the witness or evidence in himself) would stand firm and unshaken. Still he could say to those who were striking at the external evidence, "Beat on the sack of *Anaxagoras*." But you can no more hurt *my* evidence of Christianity, than the tyrant could hurt the spirit of that wise man.

5. I have sometimes been almost inclined to believe, that the wisdom of God has, in most later ages, permitted the external evidence of Christianity to be more or less clogged and incumbered, for this very end, that men (of reflection especially) might not altogether rest there, but be constrained to look into themselves also, and attend to the light shining in their hearts.

Nay, it seems (if it may be allowed for us to pry so far into the reasons of the divine dispensations) that particularly in this age, God suffers all kind of objections to be raised against the traditional evidence of Christianity, that men of understanding, though unwilling to give it up, yet, at the same time they defend this evidence, may not rest the whole strength of their cause thereon, but seek a deeper and firmer support for it.

6. Without this, I cannot but doubt, whether they can long maintain their cause: whether, if they do not obey the loud call

of God, and lay far more stress, than they have hitherto done, on this internal evidence of Christianity, they will not, one after another, give up the external, and (in heart at least) go over to those whom they are now contending with: so that in a century or two, the people of *England* will be fairly divided into real Deists and real Christians.

And I apprehend this would be no loss at all, but rather an advantage to the Christian cause: nay, perhaps it would be the speediest, yea, the only effectual way, of bringing all reasonable Deists to be Christians.

7. May I be permitted to speak freely? May I, without offence, ask, of you that are called Christians, What real loss would you sustain, in giving up your present opinion, that the Christian system is of God? Though you bear the name, you are not Christians now: you have neither Christian faith nor love. You have no divine evidence of things unseen: you have not entered into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. You do not love God with all your heart: neither do you love your neighbour as yourself. You are neither happy nor holy. You have not learned in every state therewith to be content; to rejoice evermore, even in want, pain, death; and in every thing to give thanks. You are not holy in heart; superior to pride, to anger, to foolish desires. Neither are you holy in life: you do not walk as Christ also walked. Does not the main of *your* Christianity lie in your opinion? decked with a few outward observances? For as morality, even honest heathen morality (O let me utter a melancholy truth) many of those whom you style Deists, there is reason to fear, have far more of it than you.

8. Go on, gentlemen, and prosper. Shame these nominal Christians out of that poor superstition which they call Christianity. Reason, rally, laugh them out of their dead, empty forms, void of spirit, of faith, of love. Convince them, that such unmeaning peagantry (for such it manifestly is, if there is nothing in

the heart correspondent with the outward shew) is absolutely unworthy, you need not say, of God, but even of any man that is endued with common understanding. Shew them, that while they are endeavouring to please God thus, they are only beating the air. Know your time: press on: push your victories, till you have conquered all that know not God. And then he, whom neither they nor you know now, shall arise and gird himself with strength, and go forth in his almighty love, and sweetly conquer you all together.

9. O that the time were come! How do I long for you to be partakers of the exceeding great and precious promise! How am I pained when I hear any of *you* using those silly terms, which the men of form have taught you, calling the mention of the only thing you want, *Cant!* the deepest wisdom, the highest happiness, *Enthusiasm!* What ignorance is this? How extremely despicable would it make you in the eyes of any but a Christian? But he cannot despise you, who loves you as his own soul, who is ready to lay down his life for your sake.

10. Perhaps you will say, "But this internal evidence of Christianity affects only those in whom the promise is fulfilled. It is no evidence to *me*." There is truth in this objection. It does affect them chiefly: but it does not affect them only. It cannot, in the nature of things, be so strong an evidence to others, as it is to them. And yet it may bring a degree of evidence, it may reflect some light on you also.

For, first, You see the beauty and loveliness of Christianity, when it is rightly understood. And you are sure there is nothing to be desired, in comparison of it.

Secondly, You know the Scripture promises this, and says, It is attained by faith, and by no other way.

Thirdly, You see clearly, how desirable Christian faith is, even on account of its own intrinsic value.

Fourthly, You are a witness, that the holiness and happiness above described can be attained no other way. The more you have laboured after virtue and happiness, the more convinced you are of this. Thus far then you need not lean upon other men: thus far you have personal experience.

Fifthly, What reasonable assurance can you have of things, whereof you have not personal experience? Suppose the question were, Can the blind be restored to sight? This you have not yourself experienced. How then will you know that such a thing ever was? Can there be an easier or surer way, than to talk with one or some number of men who were blind, but are now restored to sight? They cannot be deceived as to the fact in question; the nature of the thing leaves no room for this. And if they are honest men (which you may learn from other circumstances) they will not deceive you.

Now transfer this to the cause before us; and those who were blind, but now see, those who were sick many years, but now are healed, those who were miserable but now are happy, will afford *you* also, a very strong evidence of the truth of Christianity; as strong as can be in the nature of things, till you experience it in your own soul. And this, though it be allowed they are but plain men, and, in general, of weak understanding; nay, though some of them should be mistaken in other points, and hold opinions which cannot be defended.

Opinions of Bishop Taylor, respecting the Evidence of the Holy Spirit; "shewing (as he expresses it) how the Scholars of the University shall become most learned and most useful."

"WE have examined all ways, in our inquiries after religious truth, but one; all but GOD'S WAY. Let us, having missed in all the other, try this. Let us go to God for truth; for truth comes

from God only. If we miss in the truth, it is because we will not find it; for certain it is, that all the truth which God hath made NECESSARY, he hath also made legible and plain; and if we will open our eyes we shall see the sun, and if *we will walk in the light we shall rejoice in the light.* Only let us withdraw the curtains, let us remove the impediments, and the sin that doth so easily beset us. That is GOD'S WAY. Every man must, in his station, do that portion of duty which God requires of him; and then he shall BE TAUGHT OF GOD all that is fit for him to learn; there *is no other way for him but this.* The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom; and a good understanding have all they that do thereafter. And so said David of himself: *I have more understanding than my teachers; because I keep thy commandments.* And this is the only way which Christ has taught us. If you ask, what is truth? you must not do as Pilate did, ask the question, and then go away from him that only can give you an answer; for as God is the Author of truth, so he is the Teacher of it, and the way to learn is this; for so saith our blessed Lord: If any man will do his will, he *shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or no.*

"This text is simple as truth itself, but greatly comprehensive, and contains a truth that alone will enable you to understand all mysteries, and to expound all prophecies, and to interpret all scriptures, and to search into all secrets, all, I mean, which concern our happiness and our duty. It is plainly to be resolved into this proposition:

"THE WAY TO JUDGE OF RELIGION IS BY DOING OUR DUTY; AND THEOLOGY IS RATHER A DIVINE LIFE THAN A DIVINE KNOWLEDGE.

"In heaven indeed we shall first see and then love; but here on earth we must first love, and love will open our eyes as well as our hearts, and we shall then see and perceive and understand.

"Every man understands more of religion by his affections than by his reason. It is not the wit of the man, but the spirit of the man; not so much his head as his heart that learns the DIVINE PHILOSOPHY.

"There is in every righteous man a NEW VITAL PRINCIPLE. The spirit of grace is the spirit of wisdom, and teaches us by secret inspirations, by proper arguments, by actual persuasions, by personal applications, by effects and energies; and as the soul of man is the cause of all his vital operations, so is the Spirit of God the life of that life and the cause of all actions and productions spiritual; and the consequence of this is what St. John tells us of: *Ye have received the* UNCTION *from above, and that anointing teacheth you all things*—all things of some one kind; that is, certainly all things that pertain to life and godliness; all that by which a man is *wise and happy*. Unless the soul have a new life put into it, unless there be a vital principle within, unless the Spirit of life be the informer of the spirit of the man, the word of God will be as DEAD in the operation as the body in its powers and possibilities.

"God's Spirit does not destroy reason, but heightens it. God opens the heart and creates a new one, and without this creation, this new principle of life, we may hear the word of God, but we can *never understand it*; we hear the sound, but are never the better. Unless there be in our hearts a secret conviction by the Spirit of God, the GOSPEL ITSELF IS A DEAD LETTER.

"Do we not see this by daily experience? Even those things which a good man and an evil man KNOW, they do not know both alike. An evil man *knows* that God is lovely, and that sin is of an evil and destructive nature, and when he is reproved he is *convinced*; and when he is observed, he is ashamed; and when he has done, he is unsatisfied; and when he pursues his sin, he does it in the dark. Tell him he shall die, and he sighs deeply, but he *knows* it as well as you. Proceed, and say that

after death comes judgment, and the poor man believes and trembles; and yet after all this, he runs to commit his sin with as certain an event and resolution as if he *knew* no *argument* against it.

"Now since, at the same time, we see *other* persons, not so *learned*, it may be, not so much versed in the Scriptures, yet they say a thing is good and lay hold of it. They believe glorious things of Heaven, and they live accordingly, as men that believe themselves. What is the reason of this *difference?* They both read the Scriptures; they read and hear the same sermons; they have capable understandings; they both believe what they hear and what they read; and yet the *event is vastly different.* The reason is that which I am now speaking of: the one understands by one principle, the other by another; the one understands by *Nature*, the other by *Grace;* the one by human learning, the other by Divine; the one reads the Scriptures without, and the other within; the one understands as a son of man, the other as a son of God; the one perceives by the proportions of the world, the other by the measures of the Spirit; the one understands by *Reason*, the other by *Love;* and therefore he does not only understand the Sermons of the Spirit, and perceive their *meaning*, but he pierces deeper, and knows the meaning of that meaning; that is, the *secret of the Spirit*, that which is spiritually discerned, that which gives life to the proposition and activity to the soul. And the reason is, that he hath a divine principle within him, and a new understanding; that is plainly, he hath LOVE, and that is more than KNOWLEDGE, as was rarely well observed by St. Paul. Knowledge puffeth up; but charity edifieth; that is, charity maketh the best scholars. No sermons can build you up a holy building to God, unless the love of God be in your hearts, and purify your souls from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.

"A good life is the best way to understand wisdom and religion, because, by the *experiences* and relishes of religion, there

is conveyed to them a sweetness to which all wicked men are strangers. There is in the things of God, to those who practice them, a deliciousness that makes us love them, and that love admits us into God's cabinet, and *strangely clarifies the understanding by the purification of the heart.* For when our reason is raised up by the Spirit of Christ, it is turned quickly into *experience;* when our faith relies upon the principles of Christ, it is changed into *vision;* and so long as we know God only in the ways of men, by *contentious* learning, by *arguing* and dispute, we see nothing but the shadow of him, and in that shadow we meet with many dark appearances, little certainty, and much conjecture; but when we know him, with the eyes of holiness and the instruction of *gracious* experiences, with a quiet spirit and the peace of enjoyment, *then* we shall hear what we never heard, and see what our eyes never saw; *then* the mysteries of Godliness shall be open unto us, and clear as the windows of the morning; and this is rarely well expressed by the apostle. "If we stand up from the dead and awake from sleep, then Christ shall give us LIGHT."

"For though the scriptures themselves are written by the Spirit of God, yet they are written within and without; and besides the light that shines upon the face of them, *unless there be a light shining within our hearts,* unfolding the leaves, and interpreting the mysterious sense of the Spirit, convincing our consciences and preaching to our hearts; to look for Christ in the leaves of the gospel, is to look for the living among the dead. There is a life in them; but that life is, according to St. Paul's expression, hid with Christ in God, and unless the spirit of God draw it forth, we shall not be able.

"Human learning brings excellent ministeries towards this; it is admirably useful for the reproof of heresies, for the detection of fallacies, for the letter of the scriptures, for *colateral testimonies,* for exterior advantages; but there is something beyond

this, that human learning without the addition of *divine* can never reach.

"A good man, though unlearned in *secular* knowledge, is like the windows of the temple, narrow without and broad within; he sees not so much of what profits not *abroad*, but whatsoever is *within*, and concerns religion and the glorifications of God, that he sees with a broad inspection; but all human learning without God is but blindness and folly. One man discourses of the sacrament, another *receives* Christ; one discourses for or against transubstantiation; but the good man feels himself to be changed, and so joined to Christ, that he only understands the true sense of transubstantiation while he becomes to Christ bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh, and of the same spirit with his Lord.

"From holiness we have the best instruction. For that which we are taught of the Holy Spirit of God, this new nature, this vital principle within us, it is that which is worth our learning: not vain and empty, idle and insignificant notions, in which, when you have laboured till your eyes are fixed in their orbs, and your flesh unfixed from its bones, you are *no better and no wiser*. If the Spirit of God be your teacher, he will teach you such truths as will make you know and love God, and become like to him, and enjoy him forever, by passing from *similitude to union* and eternal fruition.

"Too many have lived upon air and empty notions for many ages past, and troubled themselves with tying and untying knots, like hypochondriacs in a fit of melancholy, thinking of nothings, and troubling themselves with nothings, and falling out about nothings, and being very wise and very learned in things that are not, and work not, and were never planted in Paridise by the finger of God. If the Spirit of God be our teacher, we shall learn to avoid evil and to do good, to be wise and to be holy, to be profitable and careful; and they that walk in this way shall find more peace in their consciences, *more skill in the scrip-*

tures, more satisfaction in their doubts, than can be obtained by all the polemical and impertinent disputations of the world. The man that is wise, he that is conducted by the Spirit of God, knows better in what Christ's kingdom doth consist than to throw away his time and interest, his peace and safety, for what? For religion? no: for the body of religion? not so much: for the garment of the body of religion? no, not for so much: but for the *fringes* of the garment of the body of religion; for such, and no better, are many religious disputes; things, or rather circumstances and manners of things, in which the soul and spirit are not at all concerned. The *knowledge* which comes from godliness is something more certain and divine than all demonstration and human learning.

"And now to conclude:—to you I speak, fathers and brethren, you who are or intend to be of the clergy; you see here the best compendium of your studies, the best alleviation of your labours, the truest method of wisdom. It is not by reading multitudes of books, but by studying the truth of God; it is not by laborious commentaries of the doctors that you can finish your work, but the exposition of the Spirit of God; it is not by the rules of metaphysics, but by the proportions of holiness; and when all books are read, and all arguments examined, and all authorities alledged, nothing can be found to be true that is unholy. The learning of the fathers was more owing to their piety than their skill, more to God than to themselves. These were the men that prevailed against error, because they lived according to truth. If ye walk in light, and live in the spirit, your doctrines will be true, and that truth will prevail.

"I pray God to give you all grace to follow this wisdom, to study this learning, to labour for the understanding of godliness; so your time and your studies, your persons and your labours, will be holy and useful, sanctified and blessed, beneficial to men and pleasing to God, through him who is the wisdom of the

Father, who is made to all that love him, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

The discourse from which the above extracts are made was not addressed to a popular assembly, but to the clergy of an university, and at a solemn visitation. The Bishop evidently wished that the doctrines which he taught might be disseminated among the people by the parochial clergy. They were disseminated; and in consequence of it, Christianity flourished. They must be again disseminated by the Bishops and all parochial clergy, if they sincerely wish to check the progress of infidelity. The minds of men must be impressed with the sense of an influential DIVINITY in the Christian religion, or they will reject it for the morality of Socrates, Seneca, the modern philosophers, and all those plausible reasoners, to whom this world and the *things which are seen* are the chief objects of attention. The *old divines* taught and preached with wonderful efficacy, because they spoke as men having authority from the Holy Ghost, and not as the disputers of this world, proud of a little science acquired from *heathen* writers in the cloisters of an academy. There was a celestial glory diffused around the pulpits of the old divines; and the hearers, struck with veneration, listened to the preacher as to an undoubted oracle. Full of *grace* was his lips; and *moral* TRUTH was beautifully illuminated by *divine*. She easily won and firmly fixed the affections of men, clothed, as she was, with light as with a garment.

Anecdote of the Preservation of a Soldier by his Bible.

WHEN Oliver Cromwell entered upon the command of the Parliament's army against Charles I. he ordered all his soldiers to carry a Bible in their pockets. Among the rest, was a wild, wicked young fellow, who ran from his apprenticeship in London, for the sake of plunder and dissipation. The fellow was obliged

to be in the fashion. Being one day ordered out upon a skirmishing party, or to attack some fortress, he returned back to his quarters in the evening without hurt. When he was going to bed, pulling the Bible out of his pocket, he observed a hole in it. His curiosity led him to trace the depth of this hole into his bible; he found a bullet was gone as far as Eclesiastes xi. 9. He read the verse, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." The words were set home upon his heart, by the divine Spirit, so that he became a sound believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. He used pleasantly to observe, that the Blible was the mean of saving his soul and body too.

To the Editor of the Moral and Religious Cabinet.

Respected Sir,

If you think the following, extracted from an European Magazine, worthy a place in your useful publication, by inserting it you will oblige your friend,

J. M.

WARNING SLIGHTED; OR, A HINT TO TRIFLERS.

A few weeks ago, a man in Suffolk dreamed his son was drowned. At that time his son, the subject of this affecting story, lived with a gentleman of Birch, in Essex. This dream had such an effect on the father, that he could not be easy until he went to see if it really were so: And, finding his son alive and well, he told him what had induced him to come. The unthinking youth turned this apparently trivial circumstance into a joke; as being, he thought, the effect of parental weakness. The week following, returning, in company with several others, from a friend's house, on leaving it, he jocosely desired his friend to take notice *he was not drowned yet.* The night, however,

being dark, he did not proceed far before he turned out of the path, and fell into a pond. Lights were immediately procured, and search was made, but the body was not found until next morning. Thus, in a short time, the warning held out by his afflicted father, was awfully realized!

What shall we say to these things? The Scriptures have said, "Be *ye* also ready: for in such an hour as ye *think not*, the Son of Man cometh." "God speaketh once, yea, twice, *yet man perceiveth it not.* In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed: Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose." Job xxxiii. 14—17.

CARDS.

CARDS were first invented under the reign of Charles VI. king of France, to amuse him during the intervals of the disorder which carried him to the grave. The world would have sustained no loss had his majesty been suffered to die in peace without this invention. They seem however to be the delight of vast numbers of mankind, and even men who profess to have a superiority of taste, and a greater extent of knowledge than the generality, pass away too much of their time in this useless and often injurious pursuit. The following is a very pointed and suitable reproof to such.

Mr. Locke having been introduced by lord Shaftsbury to the duke of Buckingham and lord Halifax: these three noblemen, instead of conversing with the philosopher, as might naturally have been expected, on literary subjects, in a very short time sat down to cards. Mr. Locke, after looking on for some time, pulled out his pocket-book and began to write with great attention. One of the company observing this, took the liberty of asking him what he was writing. "My lord," says Locke, "I am endeavouring

as far as possible to profit by my present situation; for having waited with impatience for the honour of being in company with the greatest geniuses of the age, I thought I could do nothing better than to write down your conversation: and, indeed, I have set down the substance of what you have said for this hour or two." This well-timed ridicule had its desired effect, and these noblemen, fully sensible of its force, immediately quitted their play, and entered into a conversation more rational, and better suited to the dignity of their characters.

"I think it very wonderful," says Adison, "to see persons of the best sense passing away a dozen hours together in shuffling and dividing a pack of cards, with no other conversation but what is made up of a few game phrases, and no other ideas but those of black and red spots, ranged together in different figures. Would not a man laugh to hear any one of this species complaining that life is short?"

ANECDOTE.

SOME years before the French Revolution, a lady who sold books in Paris, was providentially led one day to hear Father Beauvegard, an eloquent preacher in the church of Notre Dame. His discourse happened to be particularly levelled against irreligious books; and the lady had cause enough to reproach herself on that head, having been in the habit of selling many publications which were contrary to good manners and to religion. Interest had blinded her, as it does many others in the same line of business; but, penetrated by the sermon, she could no longer dissemble that impious and licentious books are a dreadful source of poison to the heart; and was compelled to acknowledge that those who print, or sell, or contribute to circulate them in any way whatever, are so many public poisoners, whom God will one day call to account for the evils they occasion. Impressed with these sentiments, she went to the preacher, and with tears

in her eyes she said to him: "You have rendered me a great service, by giving me to see how culpable I have been in selling many impious books; and I intreat you to finish the good work you have begun, by taking the trouble to come to my warehouse to examine all the books which are in it, and to put aside all those which may be injurious to morals or religion. Whatever it may cost me, I am determined to make the sacrifice. I had rather be deprived of a part of my property, than consent to lose my soul." Accordingly Father Beauvegard paid her a visit the next day, to examine her books. When he had separated the good from the bad, she took the latter, and, in his presence, cast them, one after another, into a great fire she had taken care to provide. The price of the works thus consumed, amounted, it is said, to about 6000 livres. She made the sacrifice without regret; and, from that time, endeavoured to sell no books but what might tend to counteract the evil done by the others. Every one, who has the least regard for piety and morality, will admire this excellent example. May we hope there are *some* who will "Go and do likewise?"

RESIGNATION.

NO more Ambition's air-wrought dreams inspire,
Nor Beauty's praise awakes the votive lyre;
Hence! the foul crew, who spurn at thought's controul,
And drown all sorrow in the madd'ning bowl:
And hence! the moody train of dark despair,
Unmanly grief, and self-consuming care:
Fill'd with the theme, I see blest scenes arise,
And Virtue soars amid her native skies;
Hope sooths the breast, by Passion's tempests driv'n,
And Resignation lifts the soul to Heav'n.

Nymph of the pensive mein, and moisten'd eye,
The humble spirit, and the stifled sigh;

Though faint with woe, and press'd by evil days,
Thou sweetly minglest pleading pray'r with praise;
Calm and regardless of the present gloom,
Thy fair and meek eye fix'd beyond the tomb;
Hear, whilst I pour one tributary strain,
Nor let me wake the slumb'ring chords in vain;
Shed thy soft Spirit o'er my troubled breast,
And sweetly hush the storms of life to rest.

Not thine the dull Philosophy of Schools,
The boast of Pedants, and the guide of fools;
Not such the pow'r that Calumny disdains,
And robs foul hatred of her venom'd chains;
That sooths the wounded mind with Seraph's song;
And leads the suff'ring wretch his thorny path along;
For, oh! thy heav'nly balsam can assuage,
The demon scourge of Persecution's rage;
With bliss celestial seal each tortur'd sense,
And lull the pangs of martyr'd Innocence;
In Death's sad hour, can calm the fear of woe,
And check, with tales of bliss, the heart's convulsive throe.
Come then, blest inmate of the human breast,
And quell each murmur with thy mild behest;
Teach me to bless Affliction's chast'ning hand,
And still, unmov'd, the shock of sorrow stand;
Let keen Regret her tort'ring shafts prepare,
Low at thy shrine, her keenest taunts I'll bear;
When faint beneath sad Disappointment's smart,
And Passion's wounds shall rankle in my heart;
When Youth, when Hope, when Joy and Song shall fail,
And grim Misfortune o'er my life prevail;
Taught by thy pow'r, I'll humbly kiss the rod,
And own, amid my grief, the mercy of my God.

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